

Middletown Women Charged With Animal Cruelty

DOVER (August 20, 2021) – Officers from the Division of Public Health's Office of Animal Welfare (OAW) announced the arrest today of two Middletown women on charges of animal cruelty.

Cheryl Joseph, 53, was arraigned in JP Court 11 in New Castle on 50 charges, including 48 counts of cruel neglect, and two counts of felony animal cruelty.

Amy Wood, 60, was arraigned on five counts of cruel neglect. Both were released on their own recognizance and are prohibited from possessing domestic animals pending a court hearing.

On Tuesday, the OAW's Delaware Animal Services (DAS) enforcement unit responded to a complaint concerning the welfare of animals on the Middletown property. DAS executed a search warrant to enter the property where officers discovered 56 cats living in inhumane, deplorable conditions in the home. One cat was found in extremely poor health and was rushed to a veterinary hospital where it had to be euthanized. Another deceased cat was also removed from the home. Code enforcement has condemned the home.

"No animal should live in the conditions in which we found these cats," said DAS Chief Mark Tobin. "We feel good knowing they are safe and will not suffer any longer."

The cats were transferred into the custody of Brandywine Valley SPCA, the state's shelter provider, where they have been receiving care and treatment. Many cats have hair loss from severe flea dermatitis, several are emaciated,

and some suffer from severe upper respiratory conditions. Despite their living conditions, the cats seem to be well socialized. Brandywine Valley SPCA is seeking adopters for the cats once they receive full evaluations and any necessary medical care. Those interested in adopting should fill out a form at: bvspca.org/cat-hoarding-adoption.

“If you’re considering adoption, I encourage you to visit a BVSPCA shelter near you,” said OAW Executive Director Christina Motoyoshi. “You can make a huge difference in the life of a cat that was once so neglected.”

To report animal cruelty in Delaware, call DAS at 302-255-4646.

A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person’s spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.

Delaware’s Department of Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware’s citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.